

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANKARA 02063 140921Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 2063

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU
SUBJECT: TURKISH-GREEK MINORITY PROBLEM

1. TURKISH PAPERS PROMINENTLY REPORTED MARCH 13 THAT A GROUP OF 36 ETHNIC TURKS FROM GREEK THRACE, FORCED TO EMIGRATE TO TURKEY BY THE GREEKS, WAS REFUSED ADMISSION BY TURKISH BORDER AUTHORITIES NEAR EDIRNE MARCH 11 AND WAS THEN REFUSED PERMISSION TO REENTER GREECE. THE GROUP REMAINED OVERNIGHT BETWEEN THE GREEK AND TURKISH BORDER--CROSSING POINTS AND WAS FINALLY ALLOWED TO RETURN TO GREECE MARCH 12.

2. EKREM GUVENDIREN (MFA'S DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CYPRUS/GREECE AFFAIRS) CONFIRMED THE ABOVE ACCOUNT AND TOLD US THIS INCIDENT WAS THE RESULT OF WHAT HE TERMED A SYSTEMATIC POLICY BY THE GREEK AUTHORITIES TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE TURKISH MINORITY IN WESTERN THRACE TO EMIGRATE TO TURKEY. AS PART OF THIS POLICY THE GOG OFTEN CONFISCATED FARMS OF TURKS WHO LACKED ADEQUATE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE OF OWNERSHIP, HE SAID. IT ALSO ASSISTED TURKS WHO WANTED TO EMIGRATE BY TAKING THEM TO THE TURKISH BORDER AND AIDING SURREPTITIOUS CROSSING OF THE BORDER.
1,082 GREEK NATIONALS OF TURKISH ORIGIN HAD THUS CROSSED INTO TURKEY WITHOUT PASSPORTS THE LAST TWO MONTHS. UNDER GREEK LAW, SUCH PERSONS MAY LOSE THEIR GREEK CITIZENSHIP ONCE THEY HAVE LEFT

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PAGE 02 ANKARA 02063 140921Z

GREECE. THE TURKISH GOVT, WHICH GUVENDIREN SAID HAS BEEN SLOW TO

RECOGNIZE THE FULL IMPLICATIONS OF THE GREEK POLICY, IS OPPOSED TO THE FORCED EMIGRATION OF THE TURKISH MINORITY FROM WESTERN THRACE, AND OFFICIALLY DREW THE ATTENTION OF THE GREEK EMBASSY TO THIS PROBLEM EARLIER THIS MONTH.

3. GUVENDIREN WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE MINORITIES ISSUE WAS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL POTENTIAL PROBLEMS IN GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS. HE STRESSED THE POTENTIAL SERIOUSNESS OF THE AEGEAN OVERFLIGHT QUESTION AND GREEK MILITARY ACTIVITIES ON RHODES (ABOUT WHICH TURKEY HAD "HARD INTELLIGENCE," HE SAID).

4. COMMENT: THIS LATEST INCIDENT ONCE AGAIN DRAWS PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE MINORITIES PROBLEM THAT HAS LONG VEXED TURKISH-GREEK RELATIONS BUT HAS BEEN QUIESCENT IN RECENT YEARS. IT COULD BE THAT THE GOT HAS DELIBERATELY RAISED THE ISSUE NOW IN THE HOPE OF PRODDING THE GREEKS INTO BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS AND RELATED PROBLEMS AS TURKEY HAS LONG WANTED.

MACOMBER

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